

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

**MINUTES
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 20, 2004**

ATTENDANCE: First Selectwoman Evonne Klein; Dr. Joseph Miceli;
Barbara Thorne; Linda Santarella; Robert Harrel

STAFF: John Crary, Town Administrator

OTHERS: Kate Clarke, Finance Director

CALL TO ORDER

The First Selectwoman called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. She stated that the next Regular Meeting would be held on February 2nd at 5:30 p.m.

She then requested that Item #6a on the agenda be moved up to be heard at this time.

**** MR. HARREL MOVED TO CHANGE THE AGENDA TO HEAR ITEM 6A.
** DR. MICELI SECONDED.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

NEW BUSINESS

a) Kathleen Clarke, Finance Director – report on refinancing of Town debt

Ms. Clarke stated that last Thursday there was a refund of \$9 Million in Treasury bonds that were issued in 1998. She reported that the bonds were not yet callable but they did obtain good rates. She reported that the money will go into an escrow account until callable and then will be paid off 100%. She continued that this will provide a savings of \$387,000 or 4 ½% over the next several years. She noted that for this fiscal year there will be a savings of \$42,000 and will continue through fiscal year 2007.

Dr. Miceli asked what bonds they were selling and Ms. Clarke replied they were the 1998 bonds for the middle school. She noted that this will not reduce the debt, but will save on interest payments. She continued that the average coupon on the old bonds was 4.8% and the new bonds are 3.1%, which will also reduce the years from 9 years to 8 years plus. Ms. Clarke summarized by stating that it will be the same principal but at a lower interest rate.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

December 15, 2003 – Regular Meeting

The following change was made to the Minutes:

Pg. 6: Public Comment: Third paragraph: Ms. Santarella said it was difficult to sit and listen to people making inaccurate statements when the press was present.

**** DR. MICELI MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 1, 2003
AS AMENDED.**

**** MR. HARREL SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

January 5, 2004 – Regular Meeting

The following change was made to the Minutes:

Pg. 4: c.: Mr. Harrel said that the CCM conference was held on December 16th and he received their audit report at that time.

**** DR. MICELI MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JANUARY 5, 2004
AS AMENDED.**

**** MS. THORNE SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

1ST SELECTWOMAN'S REPORT

First Selectwoman Klein reported that, since January 8th, she has met with Department Heads one-on-one to discuss the mission of their departments, staffing needs and concerns. She noted that it was very productive.

First Selectwoman Klein reported that she met with the Utility Operations Manager of Aquarium Water Company to discuss the concerns relating to the number of water main breaks on the Mansfield Avenue and Middlesex Road area. She reported that their engineering people are determining ways to approach this and she told them to get this done quickly and asked that it be a high priority. She noted that she was on top of this matter. Ms. Santarella asked if they knew why it happened. Mr. Crary replied that the main cause of the water main break was the temperature and the water surge that went through the pipes.

The First Selectwoman reported that there was a CL&P joint meeting with the towns of Stamford, Norwalk and Darien to discuss the installation of underground electric cables between Norwalk and Stamford. She reported that no consensus was reached and that Norwalk and Darien rejected the Post Road route.

The First Selectwoman reported that she attended a meeting with the Business Development Committee and some of the issues raised were that the sidewalks were in need of repair, maintenance needed to be done on the benches and lampposts, and the clock. She reported that the Committee was very concerned about downtown and it was discussed that incentives should be looked into to attract small businesses downtown. First Selectwoman Klein noted that there are two vacancies to be filled on this Committee. Ms. Santarella asked if the lampposts were in need of painting. Mr. Harrel replied that some had already been done.

The First Selectwoman reported that the Board had previously spoken about the revitalization of a Downtown Task Force. She stated that she received a CL&P newsletter about main street programs and she will study this information and continue her research on this to bring to the Board.

First Selectwoman Klein continued that she attended a SWRPA and Traffic meeting on January 8th to identify traffic issues and develop solutions. She also reported that she attended a Sports Council meeting to discuss field needs and they will provide information on field shortages.

The First Selectwoman reported that she met with the Darien Library to discuss a new location and they stressed when a location was found, the building would not be available for three years.

First Selectwoman Klein reported that she would like to hold a Special Meeting on Monday, January 26th, for the purpose of discussing land acquisition and then hold a public session to schedule projects and priorities. After discussion, the First Selectwoman stated that she would update the list of priorities for the Board and schedule a vote at a public session next week.

First Selectwoman Klein reported that there will be a Youth Options meeting on January 26th at 9:30 a.m. She asked Ms. Santarella if she would be able to attend and give a report at the next meeting. She also reported that the Darien High School Building Committee was meeting on January 22nd and asked Ms. Thorne if she would be able to attend this meeting.

First Selectwoman Klein reported that she has received many emails about skating at Gorham Pond and the change in the parking situation. She noted that she is getting mixed comments from the public and there were comments that public relations did not happen first.

The First Selectwoman commended the Public Works and Parks and Recreation Department personnel for doing a great job in the snow removal on Sunday. She commented that she was very pleased and that they were out early and often.

First Selectwoman Klein reported that the Red Cross uses a room in the Town Hall on Saturdays for a CPR class and they are not charged for the custodial fees to open and close the building. She stated it was not fair to the taxpayers to pay the charge and she was going to advise the Red Cross that they will be responsible to pay the custodian. Mr. Harrel commented that sometimes the custodian is in the building anyway at that time.

First Selectwoman Klein reported that she will meet with Jeremy Ginsberg to discuss bus shelters in Darien.

The First Selectwoman noted that, in the intent of full disclosure, she was reporting that one of her husband's clients was Northcastle Partners. She did not view this as a conflict of interest, but felt that she should advise everyone of it.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Mr. Cray reported that a year ago the Town was awarded a grant for work on the auditorium. He stated that he is now working with the architect and last week bids went out to purchase stage curtains, shades, paint and furniture. He reported that all bids were within the budgeted amount and he will award the contracts in the next few days. He continued that the work will be done when the space is available. He stated that he was very pleased that they were within the budget and will receive quality work. Mr. Harrel asked if wireless microphones were included in the grant money and Mr. Cray replied it was and that also they would have wireless computer internet access.

Mr. Cray reported that the budget was the big project that he was working on right now and there were still a few large unknowns. He stated that the most important item was health insurance and their consultant said to budget a 17% increase which he is working on lowering. He reported that another unknown was the contribution to the pension fund. Mr. Cray stated that he anticipated having the budget complete by Monday and on Friday, January 30th to have a full budget to the Board of Selectmen.

NEW BUSINESS (continued)

b) Budget Transfers for the Police Department

1. This transfer is required to allow for funds in Officers Step Increment account to be moved to Patrol Salary for disbursement.

RESOLVED:

That the following transfer of appropriations is approved for referral to the Board of Finance:

From:			To:		
Acct. No.	Account	Amount	Account No.	Account	Amount
A0332231 81008	Patrol Personnel- Step Increment	21,242	A03322331 81001	Patrol Personnel- Full Time Salary	21,242
	TOTAL	21,242		TOTAL	21,242

**** MR. HARREL MOVED TO APPROVE THE ABOVE STATED TRANSFER OF APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$21,242 FOR REFERRAL TO THE BOARD OF FINANCE.**

**** DR. MICELI SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. This transfer is needed to allow for repairs to be made to pedestrian crossing stanchion that was recently damaged in a motor vehicle accident. The operator of striking vehicle is uninsured and will be billed for the estimated \$2,416 repair.

From:			To:		
Acct. No.	Account	Amount	Account No.	Account	Amount
A0332231 81011	Patrol Personnel- Shift Diff.	2,500	A0332282 82048	Special Equipment- Repair and Maint.	2,500
	TOTAL	2,500		TOTAL	2,500

Mr. Harrel asked if they were taking legal action against the operator of the motor vehicle and Mr. Crary replied that they were.

**** MR. HARREL MOVED TO APPROVE THE ABOVE STATED TRANSFER OF APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$2,500 FOR REFERRAL TO THE BOARD OF FINANCE.**

**** MS. THORNE SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

OLD BUSINESS

- a) Discussion and decision on the proposal made by the Connecticut Department of Transportation, regarding building a multi-level parking structure at the Noroton Heights Railroad Station and Parking area**

The First Selectwoman reported that the survey results have been on the website since Friday and she thanked the Darien community that filled out the survey. Discussion followed on the proposal to build a parking structure at Noroton Heights Railroad Station.

Dr. Miceli stated that he did not see how it would give value to Darien and that it would add more traffic to that part of Town and would compete with the traffic at the high school. Mr. Harrel stated that he felt they needed to realize the community needs and he felt that the traffic congestion continues to be the number one item. He noted that

Deputy Chief Harris will not bend in allowing access to the thruway and it would be inviting a lot of traffic congestion in an area of Town that cannot handle it. Ms. Santarella stated that this was not a good thing for the Town and that more parking means more traffic. She also commented that it will create an unsafe situation with more traffic being generated and she was adamantly opposed to the proposal. Ms. Thorne stated that she very strongly believed it was addressing transportation problems in the wrong place and that instead they should look further up the line with people coming in from adjoining towns. She stated that she was not in favor of the proposal.

Mr. Harrel commented that they really needed to concentrate on getting more rail cars on the Metro North line. The First Selectwoman stated that they have been responsive to the proposal by doing a survey and she had received many emails and faxes. She continued that in terms of the comments the one thing that was mentioned was that Metro North falls short of the number of railroad cars.

First Selectwoman Klein stated that they are taking action on the Noroton Heights Railroad Station by putting it in this year's budget. She stated that they need to prioritize what they would like to do based on the survey and should have further discussion on it. She stated that she will vote no to the proposal because the community is telling her no. She continued that the project is not right for the community and that traffic is a huge negative.

The First Selectwoman then opened the discussion up to the public.

Mr. Harry Arterian, 9 Park Place, stated that it was clear from reading the survey responses that they were overwhelmingly against the parking garage. He continued that the one thing that comes through clearly is to pay attention to the underlying theme of the comments that people move to Darien because of its small town character and feel. He said that as things come up that encroach and erode that the people will react to it. He stated that it seemed like there were things that can be fixed at Noroton Heights Railroad Station that may not cost a lot of money but would make a big difference. He also noted that the vandalism/security issue was a priority to pay attention to and he concluded that the Board was headed in the right direction.

Ms. Flora Smith, 42 Hamilton Lane, asked if someone could do a sort on the zip codes to find out who is a resident and who is not for parking permits. She also asked if the Town was going to do an independent review of the repairs at railroad station. Ms. Smith concluded by stating that before the budget process begins they should think what should be done first and then tell the Board of Finance.

The First Selectwoman commented that if DOT wants to come back they will need to do an extensive traffic study first.

**** A MOTION WAS MADE BY MR. HARREL TO REJECT THE PROPOSAL
FROM THE CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO
BUILD A PARKING FACILITY AT NOROTON HEIGHTS RAILROAD STATION
** DR. MICELI SECONDED.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

First Selectwoman Klein stated that the members of the public were invited to make any comments at this time, whether they related to the agenda or not. She stated the public had three minutes to speak and the Board would listen and respond in a timely fashion.

Ms. Flora Smith, 42 Hamilton Lane, stated she would like to speak about the Planning and Zoning meeting last week that approved the Cherry Lawn Park soccer field project. She stated that a permit was not submitted and that the public was tired of the games being played in the Town.

Mr. Harry Artenian, 9 Park Place, commented that some of the businesses downtown did a good job in the snow removal, but there were a few that did not. He asked the Board to consider raising the fines, especially for commercial businesses, in not clearing the snow, as this was dangerous.

Ms. Susan Marks, 39 Fairfield Avenue, said that she lived near the high school and there was a problem with students walking to school and the sidewalks not cleared of snow.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

January 20, 2004 - Board of Education – Special Meeting on Budget at 7:00 p.m.
January 20, 2004 - Board of Finance – Meeting at 7:30 p.m.
January 21, 2004 - Parks & Recreation – Regular Meeting at 7:30 p.m.
January 26, 2004 - RTM Meeting at 8:15 p.m.
January 27, 2004 - Board of Education – Regular Meeting at 7:00 p.m.
January 27, 2004 - P&Z – Public Hearing at 8:00 p.m.
January 28, 2004 - Board of Selectmen – Budget meeting at 5:00 p.m.
January 29, 2004 - Board of Selectmen - Budget meeting at 5:00 p.m.
February 2, 2004 - Board of Selectmen – Regular meeting at 5:30 p.m.
February 3, 2004 - P&Z – Planning Meeting at 8:00 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

8:30 p.m.: Interview with Peter Thoren, nominee of the Democratic Town Committee as an Alternate member on the Zoning Board of Appeals.

- ** DR. MICELI MOVED TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 9:00 P.M.
TO INTERVIEW PETER THOREN.**
- ** MR. HARREL SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Executive Session was adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

RECONVENE REGULAR MEETING

The Regular Meeting was reconvened at 9:26 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS (continued)

Consider and take action on the following appointment:

**Peter Thoren (D) as an Alternate Member of the Zoning Board of Appeals to
fill term of Jane Magioncalda expiring on 6/30/05.**

**ON MOTION MADE AND SECONDED, IT WAS VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO
APPOINT PETER THOREN AS AN ALTERNATE MEMBER OF THE ZONING
BOARD OF APPEALS FOR A TERM EXPIRING ON 6/30/05.**

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS, ON MOTION MADE AND SECONDED, IT
WAS VOTED TO ADJOURN THE REGULAR MEETING AT 9:28 P.M.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Donna DeVito
Telesco Secretarial Services